

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07

L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 AID-05 OMB-01 /063 W

-----027276 011031Z /15

R 010815Z AUG 77

FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4915

INFO AMCONSUL LUBUMBASHI

AMCONSUL BUKAVU

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 7199

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CG

SUBJECT: KINSHASA CAMPAIGN TO GENERATE POPULAR SUPPORT
FOR MOBUTU'S JULY 1 REFORMS

1. AS PART OF A NATIONWIDE EFFORT BY REGIONAL COMMISSIONERS, URBAN COMMISSIONER SAKOMBI HAS JUST COMPLETED A TOUR OF KINSHASA'S TWENTY-FOUR ZONES TO ADDRESS MEETINGS AND THEN FIELD QUESTIONS IN AN ATTEMPT TO EXPLAIN AND DRUM UP SUPPORT FOR THE REFORMS ANNOUNCED IN PRESIDENT MOBUTU'S JULY 1 SPEECH. THE LOCAL MEDIA HAVE PLAYED UP AS EXAMPLES OF DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE BOTH SAKOMBI'S EXHORTATIONS AND HIS AUDIENCES' CRITICISMS DURING THE SUBSEQUENT QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS OF GENDARMES ACCUSED OF EXTORTING CASH FROM DEFENSELESS CITIZENS.

2. UNDERSTANDABLY, THE MEDIA HAVE NOT COVERED MORE POLITICALLY SENSITIVE ISSUES RAISED DURING WHAT WE ARE TOLD HAVE BEEN HEATED DISCUSSIONS. FOLLOWING SAKOMBI'S SPEECH IN THE ZONE OF NGIRI-NGIRI, FOR EXAMPLE, HE REPORTEDLY WAS BAITED BY A FORMER BAKONGO POLITICIAN WHO FIRST SUGGESTED THAT ZAIRE COULD HARDLY BE A DEMOCRACY WITH A MILITARY MAN AS HEAD OF STATE, AND THEN WENT ON TO ASK WHY, IF ZAIRE IS INDEED TO BECOME MORE DEMOCRATIC, MOBUTU CONTINUES TO

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APPOINT SOME POLITICAL COMMISSIONERS AND ALL MEMBERS OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL. WHEN SAKOMBI REJOINED THAT "THESE ARE NOT THE TIMES OF KASAVUBU," HE WAS ROUNDLY BOOED. SUBSEQUENT DISCUSSIONS OF ZAIRE'S JUDICIAL SYSTEM REPORTEDLY RESULTED IN MORE DENUNCIATION OF SAKOMBI AND HIS GOVERNMENT ASSOCIATES AS EXPLOITERS OF THE COMMON PEOPLE AND IN DISPARAGEMENT OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF MOBUTU'S POLITICAL REFORMS.

3. COMMENT: ON THE ASSUMPTION THAT SAKOMBI'S PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVE WAS NOT TO ACT AS A LIGHTNING ROD FOR THE DISCONTENTS OF A GERNERALLY SKEPTICAL PUBLIC, BUT RATHER TO GENERATE SUPPORT FOR THE REGIME BY EXPLAINING MOBUTU'S PROPOSED REFORMS, HE SEEMS TO HAVE FAILED. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FACT THAT THE REGIME IS BRAVING A DIALOGUE WITH THE PEOPLE AND ALLOWING AT LEAST SOME OF THEIR CRITICISMS TO BE AIRED BY THE MEDIA CAN IN ITSELF BE VIEWED AS AN ENCOURAGING INDICATION THAT THE DEVELOPING POLITICAL PROCESS WILL HAVE SOME SUBSTANCE AS WELL AS FORM. MOBUTU MONITORS SUCH DIALOGUES CLOSELY, AND THEY SHOULD SERVE TO BRING HOME TO HIM NOT ONLY THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF PEOPLE'S GRIEVANCES BUT ALSO THE REALITY THAT PROMISES OF REFORM, FAR FROM PLACATING THE PEOPLE, HAVE CREATED PRESSURES FOR CHANGE THAT ARE LIKELY TO PERSIST UNTIL THE REGIME TAKES STEPS TO FOLLOW UP THOSE PROMISES WITH ACTION.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: GOVERNMENT REFORM, POPULAR SUPPORT
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 01-Aug-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977KINSHA07199
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770274-0810
Format: TEL
From: KINSHASA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t197708111/aaaadqop.tel
Line Count: 79
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 3366b350-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Feb-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1436310
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: KINSHASA CAMPAIGN TO GENERATE POPULAR SUPPORT FOR MOBUTU'S JULY 1 REFORMS
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, CG
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odhc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/3366b350-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009